



## MEMORANDUM

April 3, 2013

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Ann Watts, Planner III, Long Range Planning, CPDS

THROUGH: Andrew Gunning, Assistant Director, CPDS

SUBJECT: **Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan (CTCFMP)**

### Background

Since 2011 the Montgomery County Planning Department has been engaged in a project to align its Master Plan with the growing initiative to build a new transit system in the County. On March 18, County Planning staff discussed with the Montgomery County Planning Board a Staff Draft of the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan (CTCFMP) which, if approved and adopted, would become part of the County's Master Plan of Highways.

The County Planning Board Public Hearing is scheduled for May 16, and public comment is invited. No date has been set for the public record to close, but the record may close as early as May 16. The plan must ultimately be approved by the County Council in order to take effect.

The purpose of this memo is to provide background briefing to the Commission in advance of a presentation at the April 10, 2013 meeting by Mr. Larry Cole, Master Planner in the Functional Planning and Policy Division of the Montgomery County Planning Department. Mr. Cole will also be available for discussions. A similar presentation and discussion is being scheduled for the Mayor and Council on April 22. Staff has invited the City's Traffic and Transportation Commission to join us for one or both of the presentations so that they are aware of the issues at hand.

### Overview of CTCFMP

This plan focuses on identifying the initial optimum routes and the necessary rights of way. It is separate from the report prepared last year by the Montgomery County Transit Task Force, whose mission was to advise the County Executive on the implementation of his vision for a countywide transit system. The Transit Task Force report can be found online at:

<http://www6.montgomerycountymd.gov/Apps/cex/transit/reportfinal.asp>

The CTCFMP plan recommends 10 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridors, three of which will run through Rockville:

- Corridor 3 - MD355 North
- Corridor 4 – MD 355 South
- Corridor 10 – Veirs Mill Road (MD586).

A corridor running along MD28 is not included, although it has been included in previous BRT documents.

A copy of the plan, which was released on March 26, is attached to this memo and can be found online at: <http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/transportation/highways/documents/CTCproposedpublichearingdraft3-26.pdf>

#### Legal Basis and Guiding Principles of the Plan

The CTCFMP will provide the legal basis for securing rights of way. Therefore, the purpose of the plan, as stated in the draft, is:

- To identify right of way needed to accommodate BRT.
- Recommend a minimum public right of way and any changes to planned number of travel lanes.
- Identify recommended station locations.

The main guiding principle of the plan is to move the transportation system towards managing travel demand by encouraging alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle. To further that goal the plan recommends:

- Designating exclusive or dedicated bus lanes, wherever there is sufficient forecast demand to support their use.
- Giving priority to transit facilities and operations where it is the more efficient mode.
- Expanding regional rail transit service.
- Supporting policies and programs that increase the comfort and safety of pedestrians and bicyclists traveling to and from transit facilities.

#### Lane Treatments

The plan recommends several types of BRT lane treatments. Which treatment is most appropriate depends upon the forecast demand and the available right of way:

##### *Dedicated Lanes vs Mixed Traffic*

- Dedicated transit lanes are recommended when there is a forecasted ridership of 1,000 passengers per peak hour in the peak direction (pphpd). These might be either two-way median with a dedicated lane in both directions or, in certain circumstances, one-way median.
- Mixed traffic operations, where buses and cars share the same lanes, are recommended on lower ridership route segments.

##### *Median vs Curb Lanes*

- High ridership forecasts warrant a median busway with a dedicated right of way. This option requires a wider right of way and makes left turns for other traffic more difficult. However, this difficulty can be mitigated in areas with a robust supporting street grid, such as White Flint, and the adjacent City portion of Rockville Pike, as recommended in the draft Rockville's Pike plan.
- Curb lane operations are recommended in corridors with lower BRT ridership forecasts.

### Plan Implementation

Plan implementation is to be in two phases:

Phase 1 focuses on corridors where the current zoning and related 2040 forecast bus ridership indicates that rapid transit would be viable, and where installations of a rapid transit line can be accomplished without major impacts on existing development. Only Phase 1 segments have recommended rights of way that should be used to pursue implementation in the near term.

All routes within the cities of Rockville and Gaithersburg are designated as mixed traffic transitways during Phase 1, and therefore do not require any changes to rights of way.

Phase 2 focuses on corridors that require additional study to confirm the recommended treatment and right of way.

All transit corridor segments within the Cities of Rockville and Gaithersburg are included in Phase 2 and the jurisdictions must determine the recommended rights of way through their own master planning processes. However, specific approaches to the routes are identified and may imply a need for adjusted rights of way.

### MD355 Routes

MD355 is divided into two routes, and the division occurs in Rockville at the Rockville Metro Station. Both are identified as BRT – Activity Center Corridors, “defined by high-speed, high-frequency, all-day transit service...most appropriate on activity center corridors that connect multiple, dense, mixed-use areas.”

#### Corridor 3: MD355 North

Phase 1 – all roadway located within City of Rockville to be a mixed traffic transitway, with the exception of the stretch south of Indianola to north of North Campus Drive (where the County lies on the western side) which is to be a two-lane median transitway.

Phase 2 – Two-way median transitways on MD 355 in the City of Rockville.

Stations in Rockville: MD355/King Farm Boulevard; MD355/Gude Drive; MD355/Mannakee Street; Rockville Metro Station.

#### Corridor 4: MD355 South

Phase 1 – from Church Street to just south of Hubbard Drive, a mixed traffic transitway. South of Hubbard Drive, this route would have a two-way median transitway.

Phase 2 – from Church Street to just south of Hubbard Drive, a two-way median transitway.

Stations in Rockville: Rockville Metro Station; MD355/Edmonston; MD355/Halpine.

### Corridor 10: Veirs Mill Road

Veirs Mill Road is identified as a BRT – Commuter Corridor, “defined by moderate speed, moderate frequency, limited-stop transit service during peak periods...most appropriate on commuter corridors that connect moderate density residential areas to employment centers.”

Phase 1 – Within City limits – a mixed traffic transitway.

Phase 2 – Within City limits – a one-lane median transitway where buses in both directions share a single lane.

Stations within Rockville: Rockville Metro Station; MD586/Norbeck; MD586/Broadwood; MD586/Twinbrook Parkway.

### Bicycle-Pedestrian Priority Areas

Bicycle-Pedestrian Priority Areas have been identified throughout the County to facilitate good bicycle and pedestrian access to all transit stations. However, in line with the major plan recommendations, none have been identified within the cities of Rockville or Gaithersburg, most likely because of the lack of planning authority in either jurisdiction. The following areas immediately adjacent to the City that have recently been master planned by the County have been identified:

- Shady Grove plan area
- LSC Central, LSC West, LSC North and the Belward Districts in the Great Seneca Science Corridor plan area, and
- White Flint I, White Flint II and Twinbrook Sector plan areas.

### Brunswick Rail Line

The plan recommends the addition of a third rail track from the Metropolitan Grove Station north to the Frederick County line. This would decrease conflicts with freight routes and allow more frequent MARC service, including all-day and weekend services.

### **Recommendation**

Staff has the following recommendations:

- That the Planning Commission receive the presentation and gain a full understanding of why the draft takes the approach that it does for Rockville routes.
- That the Planning Commission discuss any comments they may have on the draft plan at their meeting on April 24, so that their comments, together with any from the Traffic and Transportation Commission, can be submitted to the Mayor and Council for their consideration at a meeting in early May.

### **Next Steps**

April 22, 2013	MNCPPC Presentation to Mayor and Council
April 23, 2013	Rockville Traffic and Transportation Commission meeting
April 24, 2013	Planning Commission meeting
May 6 or 13, 2013	Mayor and Council meeting

May 16, 2013

MNCPPC Planning Board Public Hearing on the Countywide Transit Corridors  
Functional Master Plan – no Close of Record date has been announced, but it may  
be May 16, the same date as the Public Hearing.

Attachment: Staff Draft – Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan

cc: Craig Simoneau, Director, DPW  
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